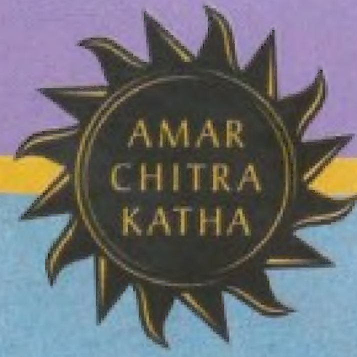
VASANTASENA



Vasantasena

An Adaptation of the Famous Sanskrit Play, Mrichchakatikam



Illustrated Classics From India

Vasantasena

Adapted from Shudra's Mrichchakatikam

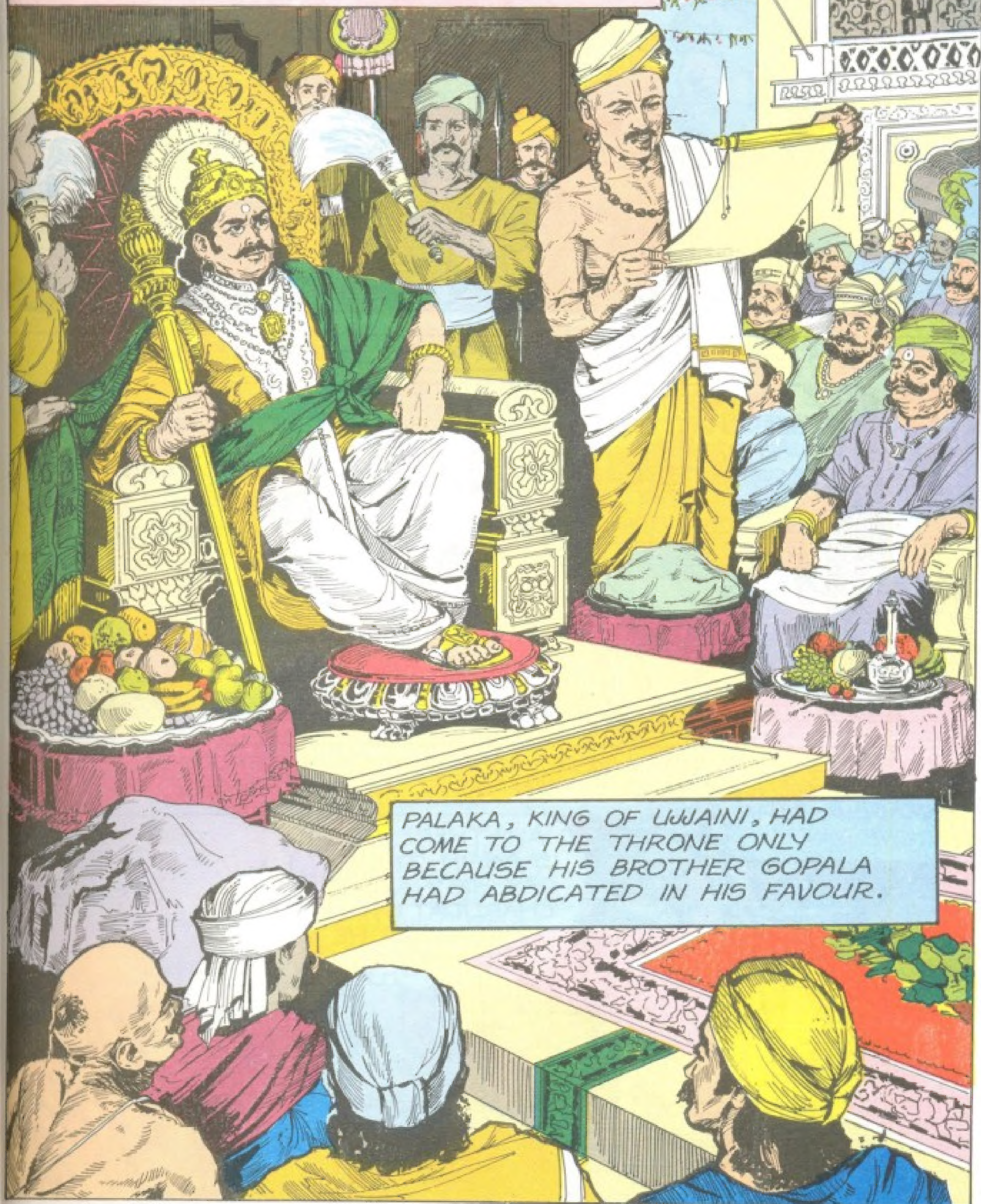
This Amar Chitra Katha has been adapted from Mrichchakatikam by Shudraka, which is regarded as one of the Sanskrit classics. Yet, it is unique in its plot and characterisation. The story tells of a king who is overthrown by a leader of the people. This assumes added significance especially since the author of the play, Shudraka, was a king. The play was written between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD. It is an intriguing story with myriad twists and turns in the plot.

This tale contains a number of romantic and exciting characters like the wealthy and beautiful dancer Vasantasena who loves the noble but impoverished merchant Charudatta, and Vasantasena's faithful slave Madanika who is loved by the brave Sharvilaka, who in turn is involved in the usurped Prince Aryaka's struggle to regain his kingdom.

Mrichchakatikam literally means a "clay cart". It refers to the toy cart that Charudatta's son plays with. The play depicts a sufficiently advanced society. The political theme and secular treatment gives this play contemporary relevance. Vasantasena has been translated into English and French and successfully produced in its English version in the USA.

Script: Kamala Chandrakant Illustrations: G.R. Naik

VASANTASENA



PALAKA WAS A TYRANT. MOST OF HIS SUBJECTS HATED HIM.

SHARVILAKA, PALAKA IS BECOMING MORE RUTHLESS, AND HAS GIVEN A FREE HAND TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, THE WICKED SAMSTHA-NAKA.

NEVER MIND, MY FRIEND BE PATIENT. IT IS PROPHESIED THAT ARYAKA, GOPALA'S SON WILL SOON BECOME KING.

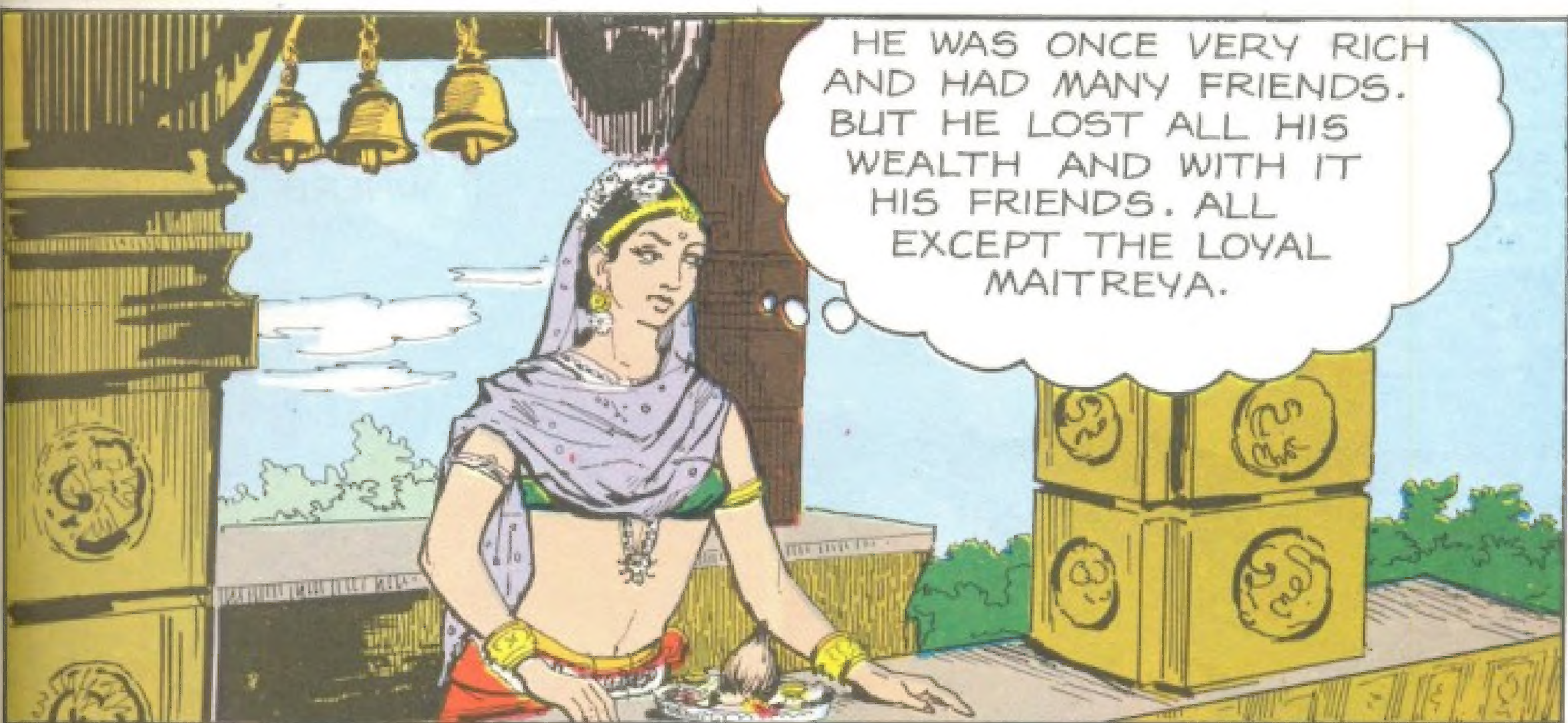
SHARVILAKA WAS A LEADER OF ARYAKA'S SUPPORTERS.

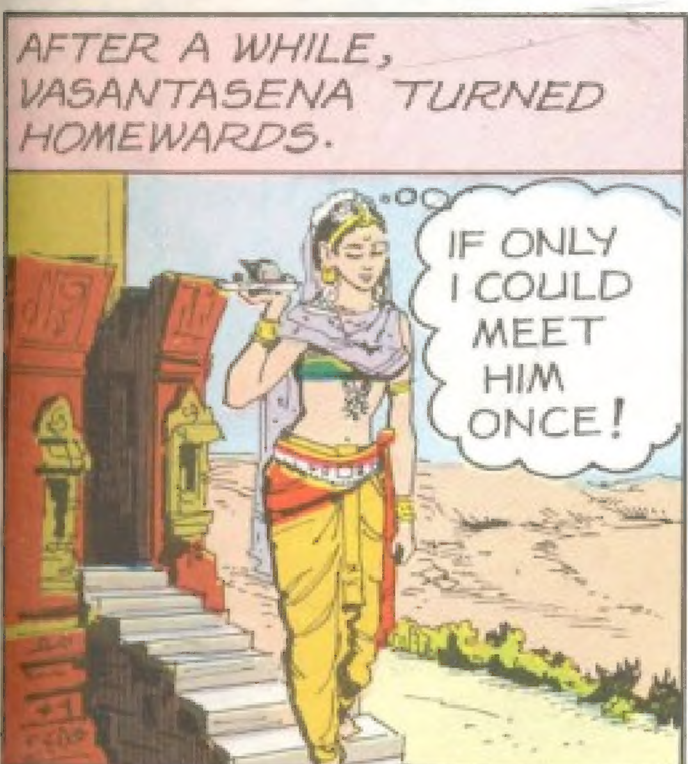
WE MUST SEE THAT THE PROPHECY COMES TRUE.

YES, YOU MUST JOIN US AND WORK FOR IT.

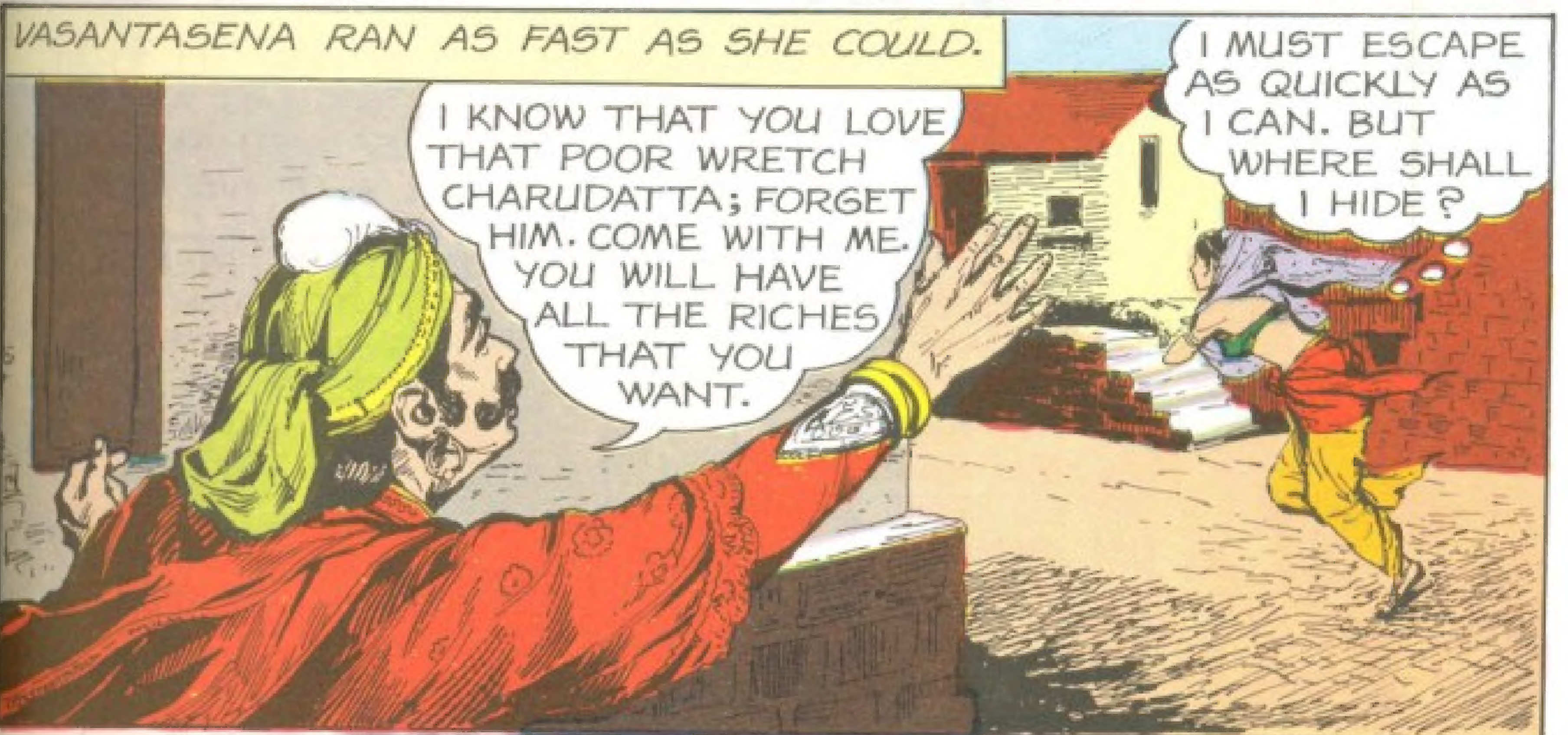
IN THAT SAME TOWN LIVED VASANTASENA A BEAUTIFUL, WEALTHY DANCER WHO OFTEN WENT TO THE TEMPLE OF KAMADEVA NEAR BY. ONE DAY—

AH! THERE HE IS AGAIN. THEY SAY HIS NAME IS CHARUDATTA. HOW NOBLE HE LOOKS.


HE WAS ONCE VERY RICH AND HAD MANY FRIENDS. BUT HE LOST ALL HIS WEALTH AND WITH IT HIS FRIENDS. ALL EXCEPT THE LOYAL MAITREYA.


AFTER A WHILE, VASANTASENA TURNED HOMEWARDS.
IF ONLY I COULD MEET HIM ONCE!


SUDDENLY—
STOP! VASANTASENA, STOP! DON'T BE AFRAID.
OH! NO! IT IS THE EVIL SAMSTHANAKA. WHAT SHALL I DO? I'M ALL ALONE.

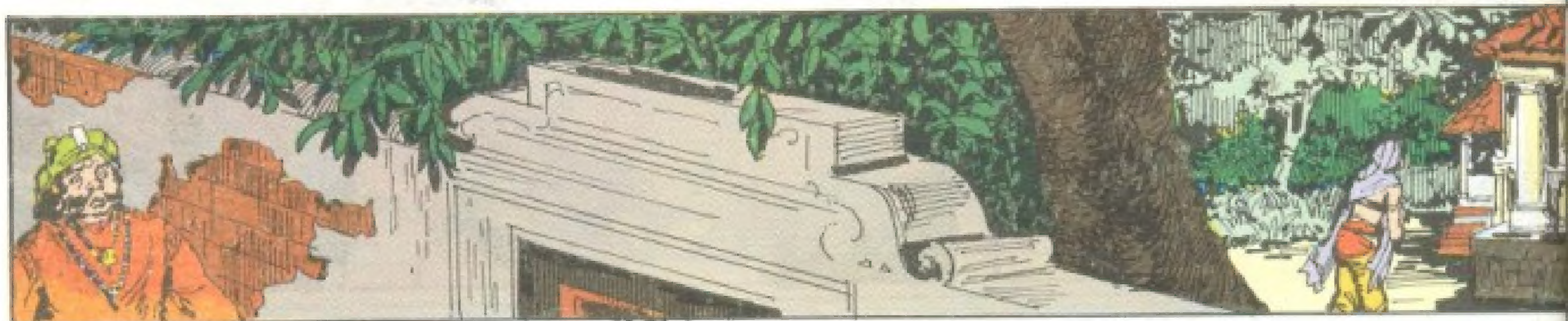

VASANTASENA RAN AS FAST AS SHE COULD.
I KNOW THAT YOU LOVE THAT POOR WRETCH CHARUDATTA; FORGET HIM. COME WITH ME. YOU WILL HAVE ALL THE RICHES THAT YOU WANT.
I MUST ESCAPE AS QUICKLY AS I CAN. BUT WHERE SHALL I HIDE?

SAMSTHANAKA CONTINUED TO CHASE HER.



VASANTASENA RAN STRAIGHT IN THROUGH THE GATE.





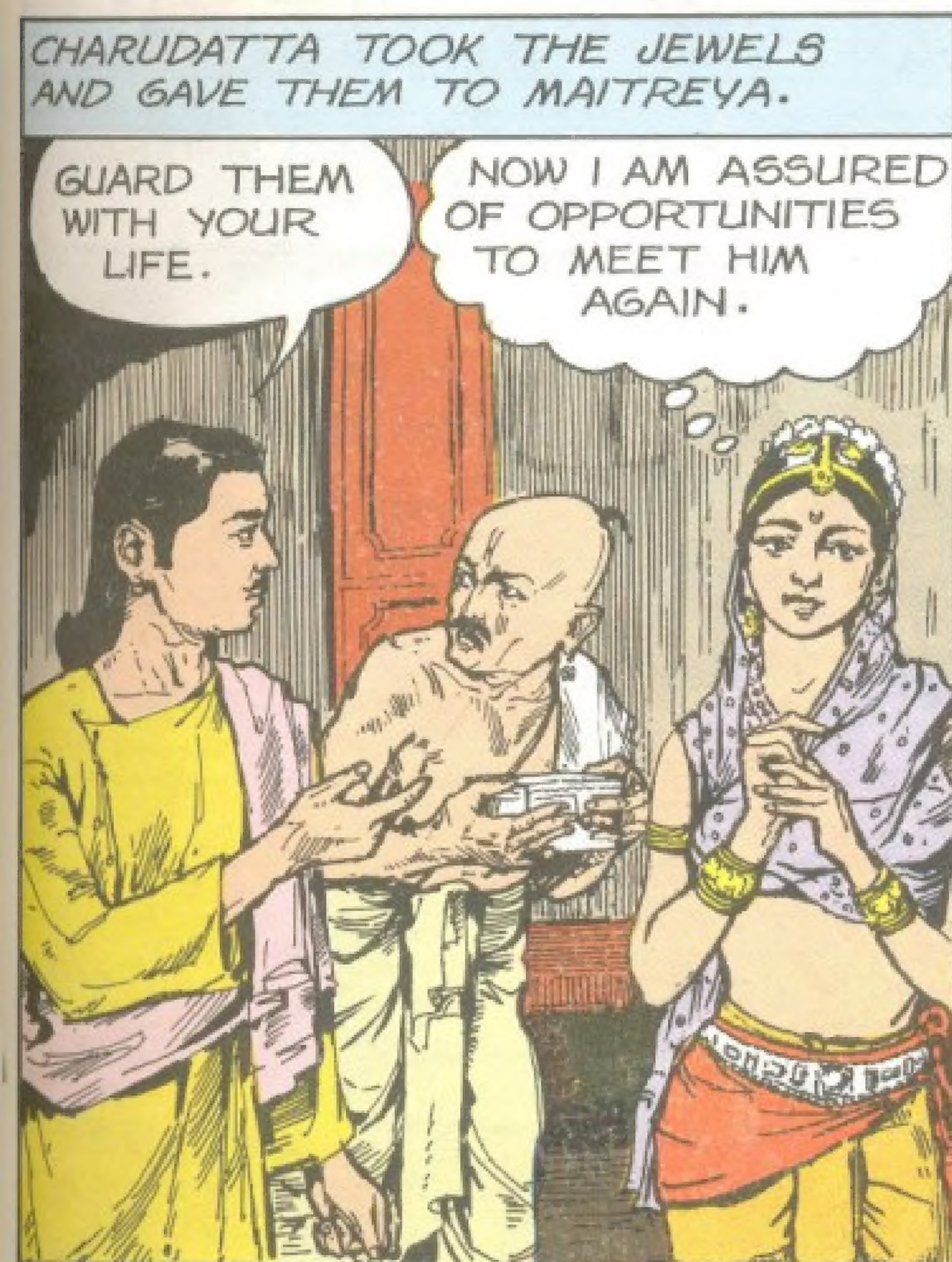
BUT BY THEN, VASANTASENA HAD ALMOST REACHED THE HOUSE.






VASANTASENA! WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU?
SIR, A CERTAIN SCOUNDREL CHASED ME FOR MY JEWELS. WILL YOU KEEP THEM SAFE FOR ME?


BUT MY HOUSE IS HARDLY FIT TO GUARD SUCH TREASURES.
EXCUSE ME, SIR. IT IS IN YOU AND NOT IN YOUR HOUSE THAT I PLACE MY CONFIDENCE.


CHARUDATTA TOOK THE JEWELS AND GAVE THEM TO MAITREYA.
GUARD THEM WITH YOUR LIFE.
NOW I AM ASSURED OF OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET HIM AGAIN.


NOW, KIND SIRS, IT IS GETTING DARK. MAY I TAKE YOUR LEAVE?
WE SHALL ESCORT YOU HOME.

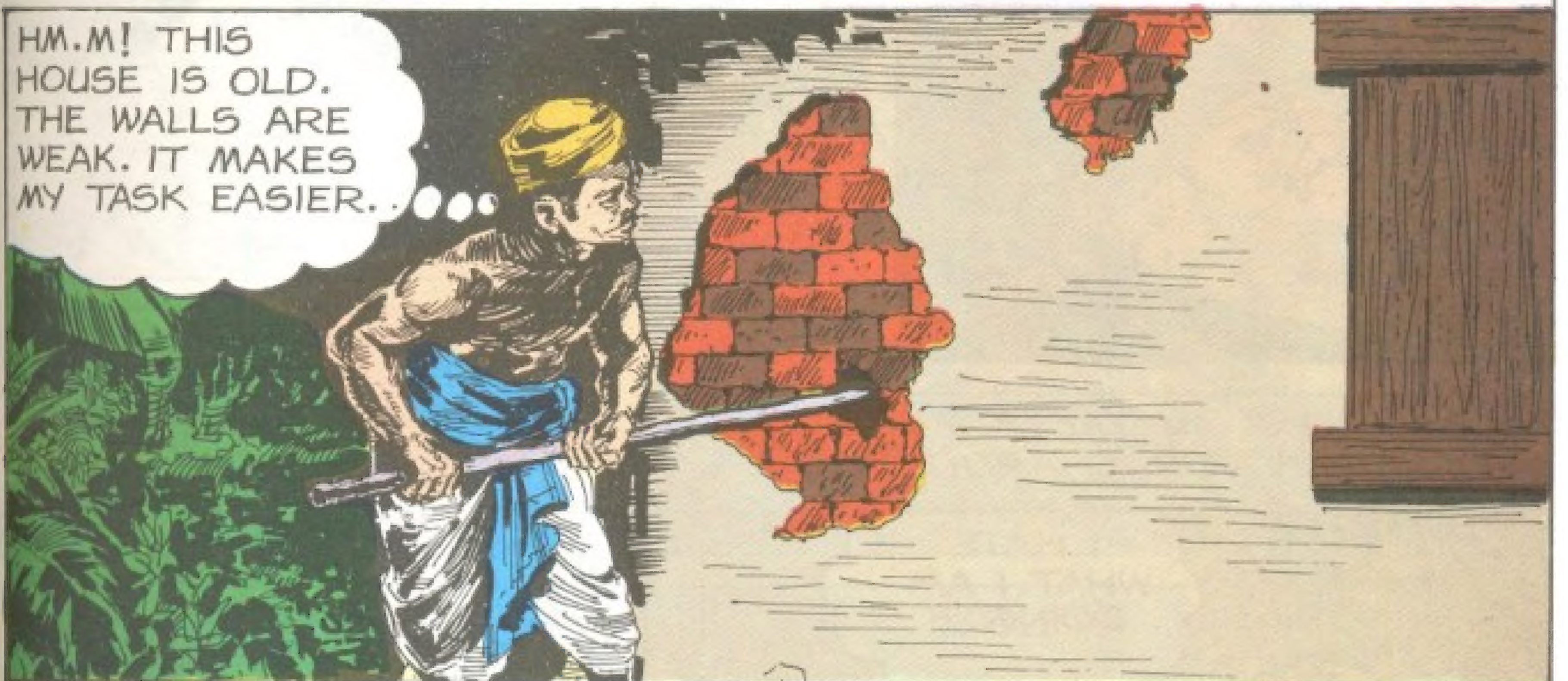

WHEN THEY REACHED THE GATE OF HER HOUSE –
AH! THERE GOES MADANIKA, MY FAITHFUL SLAVE. THANK YOU, SIRS.
FARE YOU WELL.


ONCE INSIDE, VASANTASENA CONFIDED IN MADANIKA.
NOW THAT YOUR JEWELS ARE IN HIS CARE YOU CAN MEET HIM OFTENER, MY LADY.
THAT HAS OCCURRED TO ME TOO.


HOW WELL I UNDER–STAND MY MISTRESS'S FEELINGS! MY LOVE FOR SHARVILAKA WOULD HAVE MADE ME DO THE SAME. HOW I LONG FOR THE DAY WHEN I MIGHT BECOME HIS WIFE.


MEANWHILE, CHARUDATTA AND MAITREY
WERE RETIRING FOR THE NIGHT.
ARE THE JEWELS SAFE?
YES! RIGHT UNDER MY PILLOW. WE MAY SLEEP IN PEACE.


THAT NIGHT A FIGURE STOLE QUIETLY INTO CHARUDATTA'S GARDEN. IT WAS SHARVILAKA.
PALAKA'S RULE MAKES ME A THIEF. MADANIKA, I KNOW OF NO OTHER WAY TO BUY YOUR FREEDOM AND TO MAKE YOU MY WIFE.


HM.M! THIS HOUSE IS OLD. THE WALLS ARE WEAK. IT MAKES MY TASK EASIER..


SHARVILAKA ENTERED THE ROOM WHERE CHARUDATTA AND MAITREYA WERE SLEEPING.
ALL ARE ASLEEP. BUT THE ROOM IS BARE. HAS THE RICH FACADE DECEIVED ME ?


THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE SEEMS TO BE A LOVER OF MUSIC AND DANCING.


JUST THEN MAITREYA, HALF ASLEE
SAW THE BREACH IN THE WALL.
HEY FRIEND! PERHAPS THER
IS A THIEF IN THE HOUSE. HERE TAKE THESE JEWELS.


IN THE DARK MAITREYA MISTOOK SHARVILAKA FOR CHARUDATTA.
I HATE WHAT I AM DOING.


THE THOUGHT OF BEING ABLE TO BUY MADANIKA'S FREEDOM STILLED HIS UNEASY CONSCIENCE.
BUT THIS WILL MAKE MADANIKA MINE.

JUST THEN A MAID ENTERED THE ROOM.
THANK GOD! IT'S ONLY A WOMAN. BUT I'D BETTER ESCAPE BEFORE SHE RAISES AN ALARM.
THIEF! THIEF! MASTER! MASTER, WAKE UP!

MAITREYA WAS THE FIRST TO WAKE UP.
A THIEF HAS BROKEN INTO THE HOUSE. HE HAS ESCAPED.
WHAT ARE YOU SHOUTING FOR?

HO! HO! HO! HOW DISAPPOINTED HE MUST HAVE... HEY, THE JEWELS! WHERE ARE THE JEWELS? CHARUDATTA, GET UP!

MAITREYA WAS NOW WORRIED.
CHARUDATTA, WHERE ARE THE JEWELS I GAVE YOU?
JEWELS? YOU GAVE ME? YOU MUST BE DREAMING.


ALAS! THEY HAVE BEEN STOLEN.
O RELENTLESS FATE! SO FAR SHE HAD ONLY DEPRIVED ME OF MY WEALTH. NOW SHE ATTACKS MY VERY HONOUR.


I CANNOT BEA
THE DISTRESS O
MY GOOD MASTER
I MUST GO AND
TELL MY MISTRES


AFTER THE MAID HAD TOLD HER THE WHOLE STORY...
ALAS! ALL UJJAINI WILL SAY THAT MY HUSBAND, BECAUSE OF HIS POVERTY, HAS KEPT THE JEWELS FOR HIMSELF AND....
SEND MAITREYA TO ME.


ALL THAT I HAVE IS MY INVALUABLE PEARL NECKLACE. THE ONE MY MOTHER GAVE ME. IT WILL REDEEM MY HUSBAND'S HONOUR AND MORE.


WHEN MAITREYA CAME—
MAITREYA, TAKE THESE PEARLS AND PRESERVE MY HUSBAND'S HONOUR. BE DISCREET. RESPECT HIS SENTIMENTS.
I SHALL.
WHAT A NOBLE WOMAN!


MAITREYA TOOK THE PEARLS TO CHARUDATTA.
TAKE THIS. FROM A DEVOTED WIFE.


I AM INDEED A RICH MAN. I HAVE A LOVING WIFE, A LOYAL FRIEND, AND MY HONOUR, WHICH A POOR MAN CAN SELDOM KEEP.


MAITREYA, GO TOMORROW MORNING AND GIVE THIS NECKLACE TO VASANTASENA.


MEANWHILE EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, SHARVILAKA WENT TO MADANIKA
MADANIKA, I HAVE COME TO BUY YOUR FREEDOM.
FROM WHERE DID YOU GET THE MONEY?


AS SHARVILAKA CONFIDED HIS NIGHT'S ADVENTURE TO HER.
MADANIKA! MADANIKA! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?


THE JEWELS BELONG TO MY MISTRESS. SHE HAD LEFT THEM IN HIS CARE.
BUT WHY?


MADANIKA THEN TOLD HIM OF HER MISTRESS'S LOVE FOR CHARUDATTA.
OH! HOW CAN I EVER STRAIGHTEN THIS OUT?
PRETEND THAT CHARUDATTA HAS SENT YOU TO MY MISTRESS WITH THE JEWELS.

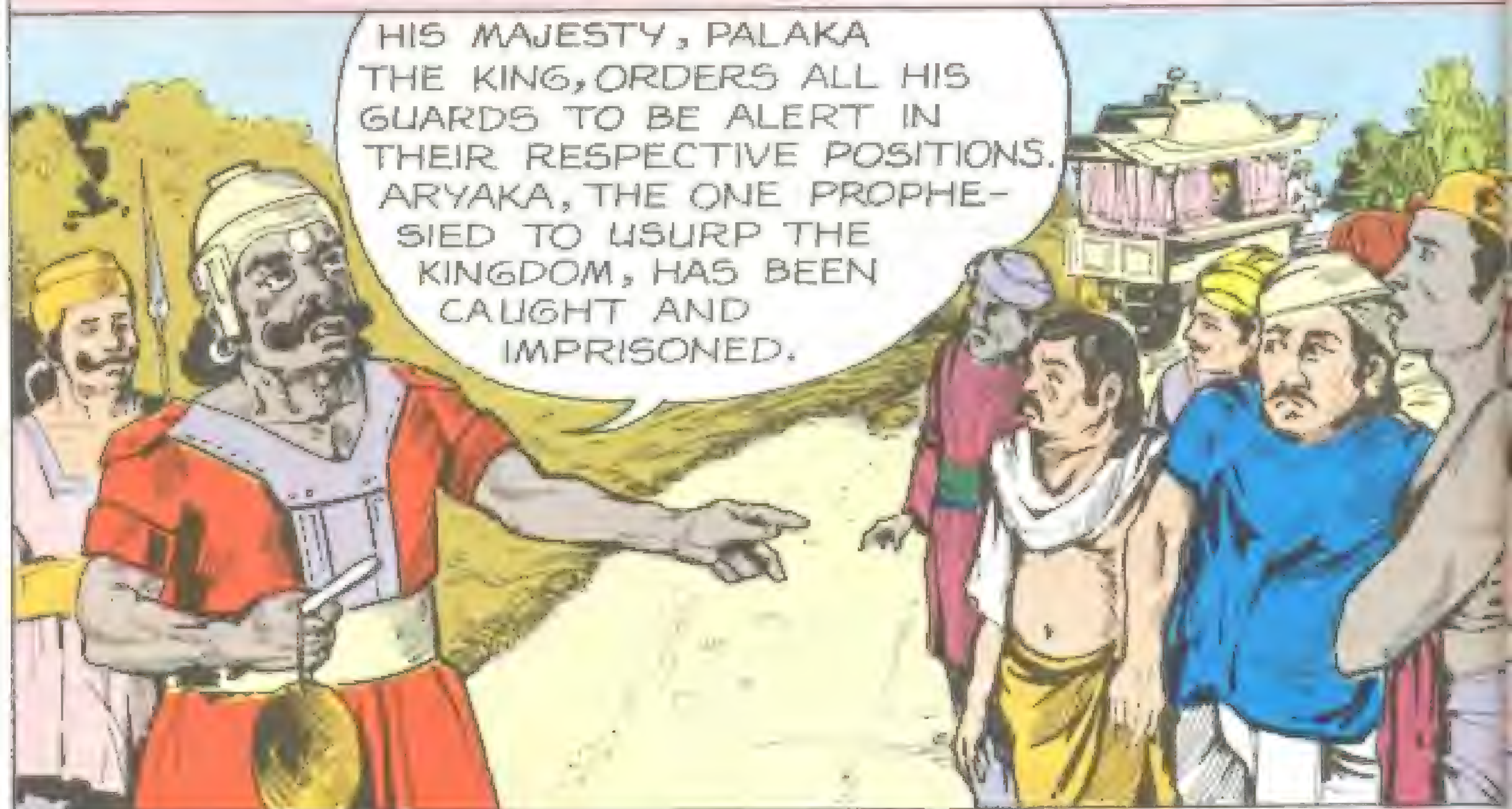

YOU WILL THEN BE NO THIEF. MY MIST-RESS WILL HAVE HER JEWELS AND CHARU-DATTA'S HONOUR WILL BE UNSULLIED.


SHARVILAKA, NOT KNOWING THAT VASANTASENA HAD OVERHEARD THE CONVERSATION, DID EXACTLY AS MADANIKA ADVISED.
....AND HE BEGS YOU TO TAKE THEM BACK.
SIR, IN RETURN I WANT YOU TO TAKE SOMETHING -MADANIKA.


B-BUT, I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
I DO; ONLY TOO WELL.


VASANTASENA THEN SENT FOR HER CARRIAGE.
GO MADANIKA. YOU ARE A FREE WOMAN, BUT DO NOT FORGET ME.
HEAVEN BLESS YOU.

AS SHARVILAKA AND MADANIKA RODE ALONG, THE KING'S HERALD WAS OUT ON THE STREETS MAKING AN ANNOUNCEMENT.









WHEN THE CARRIAGE DROVE AWAY WITH MADANIKA –

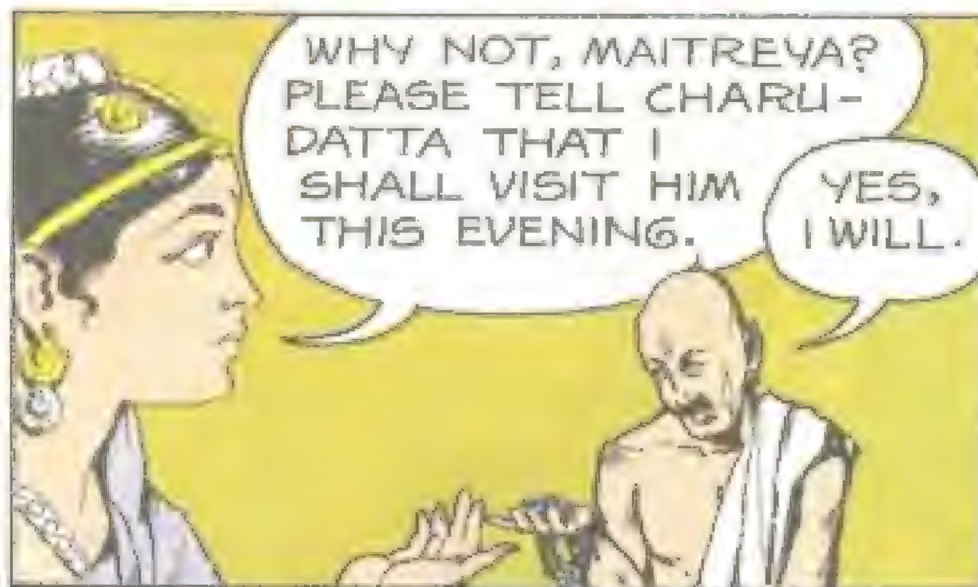


HARDLY HAD SHARVILAKA AND MADANIKA LEFT, WHEN MAITREYA CAME TO VASANTASENA.

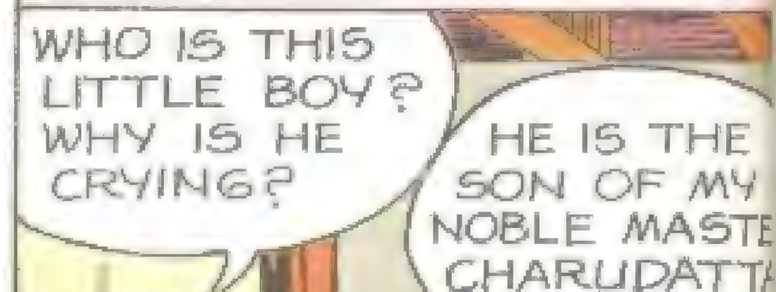




THE JEWELS WERE STOLEN AND HE IS TOO NOBLE TO ADMIT IT. SHOULD I BRING THEM OUT? NO, NOT YET.
WELL, WILL YOU ACCEPT IT?



WHY NOT, MAITREYA? PLEASE TELL CHARU-DATTA THAT I SHALL VISIT HIM THIS EVENING.
YES, I WILL.



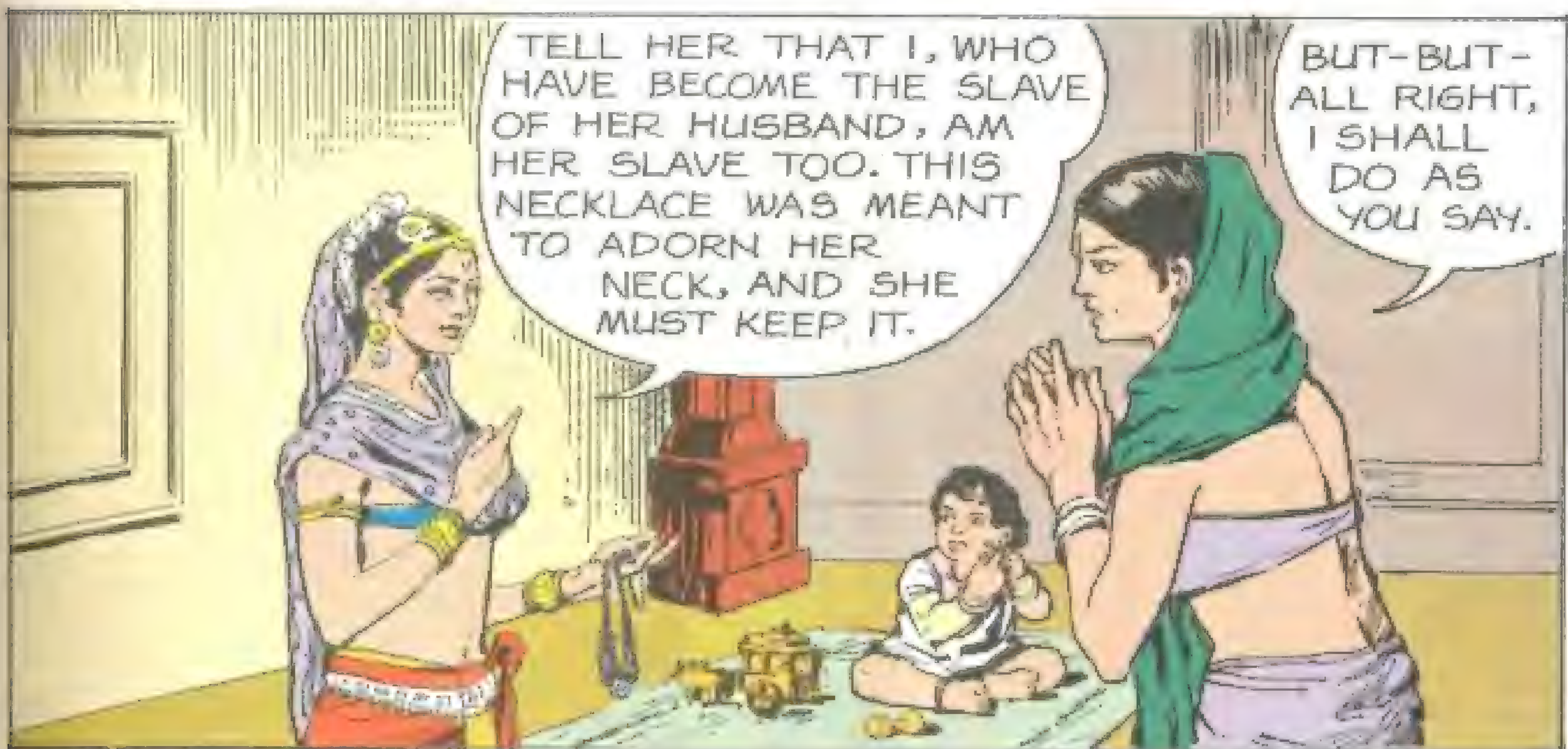
THAT EVENING VASANTASEN
WENT TO CHARUDATTA'S HOUSE.



WHO IS THIS LITTLE BOY? WHY IS HE CRYING?
HE IS THE SON OF MY NOBLE MASTE
CHARUDATT



HE WANTS A GOLDEN CART TO PLAY WITH.
I SHALL QUIET HIM. YOU TAKE THIS STRING OF PEARLS TO YOUR MISTRESS.


TELL HER THAT I, WHO HAVE BECOME THE SLAVE OF HER HUSBAND, AM HER SLAVE TOO. THIS NECKLACE WAS MEANT TO ADORN HER NECK, AND SHE MUST KEEP IT.
BUT-BUT- ALL RIGHT, I SHALL DO AS YOU SAY.

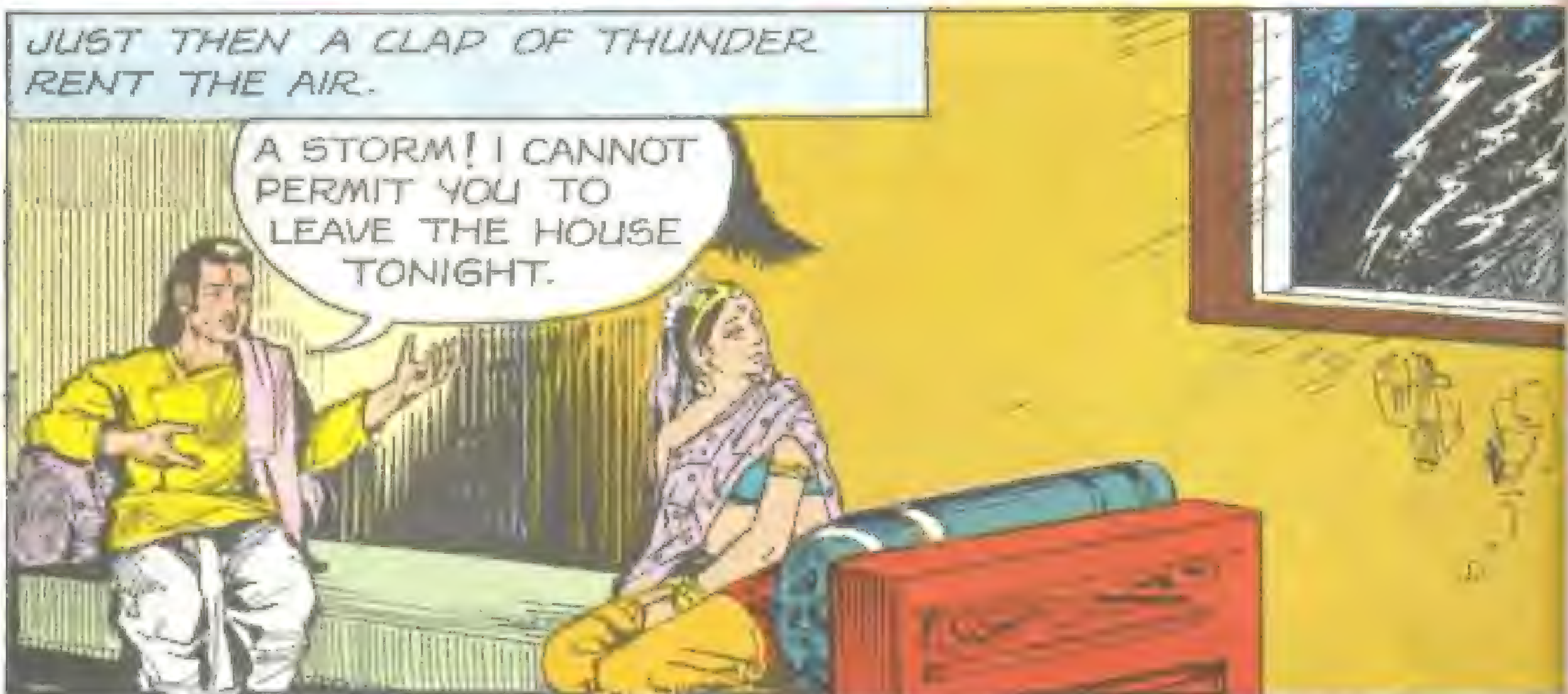

VASANTASENA THEN REMOVED SOME OF HER OWN JEWELS AND TURNED TO THE BOY.
SON, TAKE THESE JEWELS AND DECORATE YOUR CART.


A MOMENT LATER THE MAID RETURNED.
MY MISTRESS WILL NOT ACCEPT IT. SHE SAYS IT WAS A PRESENT TO YOU FROM CHARUDATTA, WHO IS HER MOST PRECIOUS ORNAMENT.


SHE THEN TURNED TO THE CHILD.
COME, MY SON, LET US GO AND PLAY. MADAM, I'LL BRING YOUR JEWELS TO YOU WHEN HE TIRES OF THEM.


A FEW MINUTES LATER CHARUDATTA ENTERED THE ROOM.
I AM SORRY I HAD TO KEEP YOU WAITING.
I WAS CONTENT TO WAIT.


NOBLE CHARUDATTA, YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE SENT THE PEARL NECKLACE TO ONE AS UNWORTHY AS I.
MY BELOVED VASANTASENA!


JUST THEN A CLAP OF THUNDER RENT THE AIR.
A STORM! I CANNOT PERMIT YOU TO LEAVE THE HOUSE TONIGHT.

AT THAT MOMENT THE MAID ENTERED.

NOBLE MASTER, MY MISTRESS SAYS THAT LADY VASANTA-SENA SHOULD SPEND THE NIGHT AT OUR HOME. SHE HAS SENT ME TO GET A ROOM READY FOR HER.

THAT SETTLES IT. YOU SHALL REST HERE TONIGHT.

WHEN THE MAID LEFT—

TOMORROW WE SHALL SPEND THE DAY IN THE GARDENS OUTSIDE THE TOWN. I SHALL LEAVE EARLY AND MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR A COTTAGE. YOU FOLLOW LATER IN MY CARRIAGE. IT WILL BE WAITING FOR YOU.

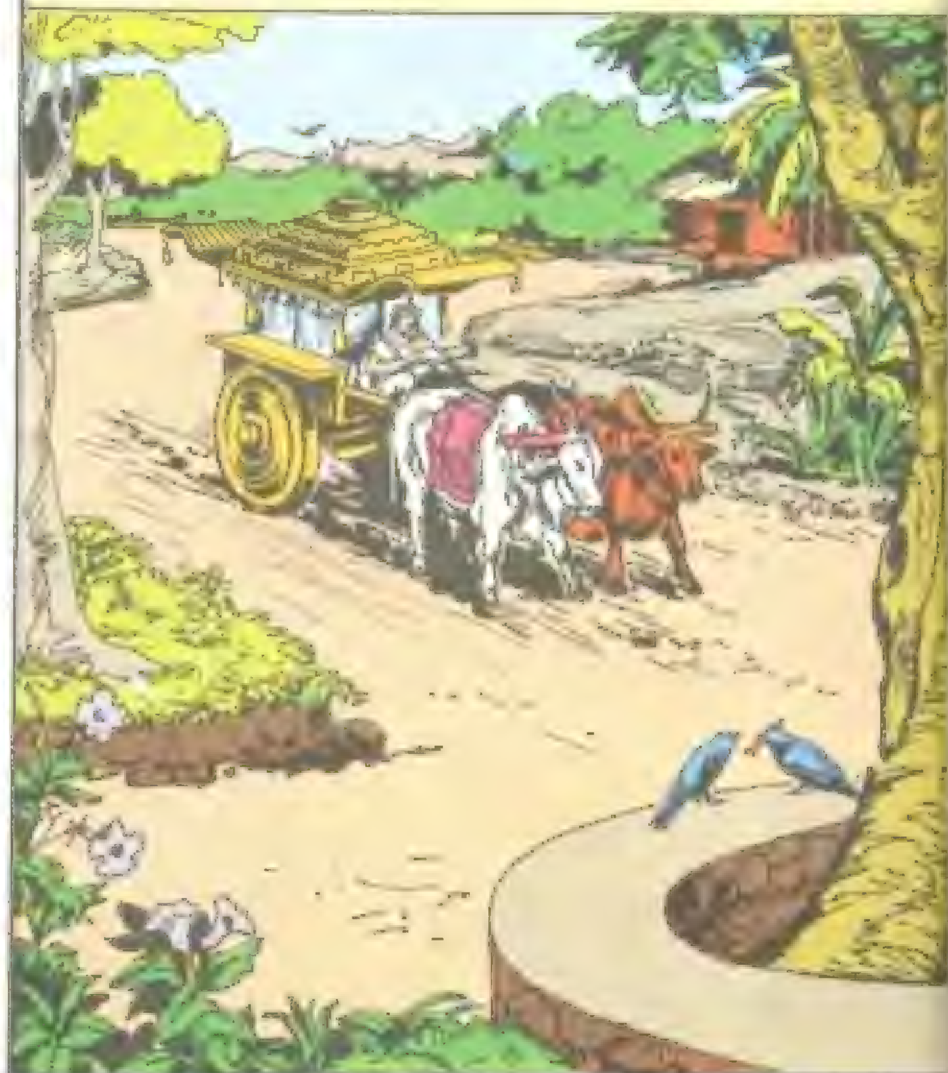
THE NEXT MORNING –

I AM READY MUCH EARLIER THAN EXPECTED. AH! THERE'S THE CARRIAGE, WAITING FOR ME.

MISTAKING IT FOR CHARUDATTA'S CARRIAGE, SHE GOT IN.



WHEN THE CARRIAGE ARRIVED AT THE PARK ...



...TO VASANTASENA'S DISMAY, IT WAS NOT CHARUDATTA BUT SAMSTHANAKA WHOM SHE SAW.







SAMSTHANAKA WAS VERY ANGRY WHEN HE HEARD THE NAME OF HIS RIVAL.



SAMSTHANAKA TRIED TO STRANGLE VASANTASENA AND, BELIEVING HER TO BE DEAD, RODE OFF IN HIS CARRIAGE.



MEANWHILE ARYAKA HAD ESCAPED FROM PRISON.



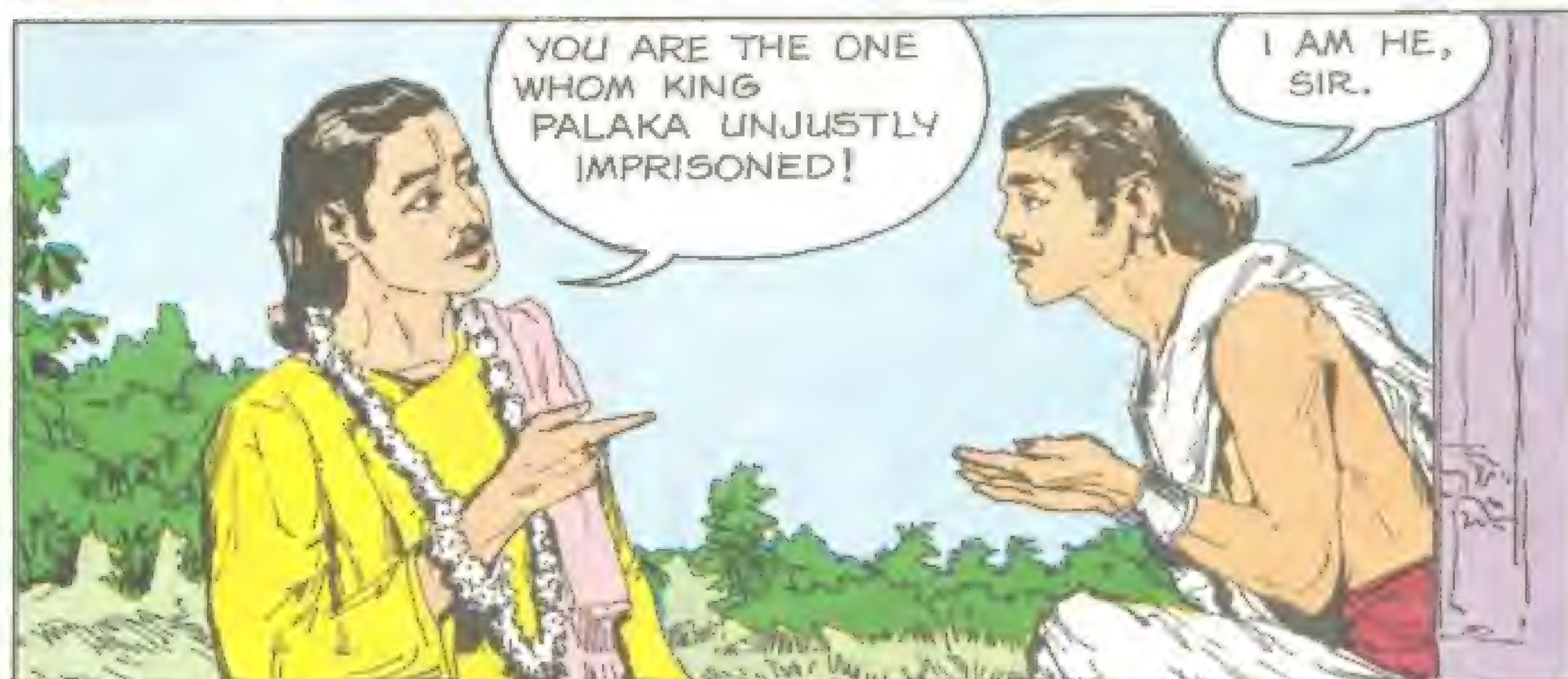
JUST THEN HE SAW CHARUDATTA'S CARRIAGE WHICH WAS WAITING FOR VASANTASENA.




THE DRIVER MISTOOK THE CLANKING OF ARYAKA'S CHAINS FOR THE TINKLE OF VASANTASENA'S ANKLETS.

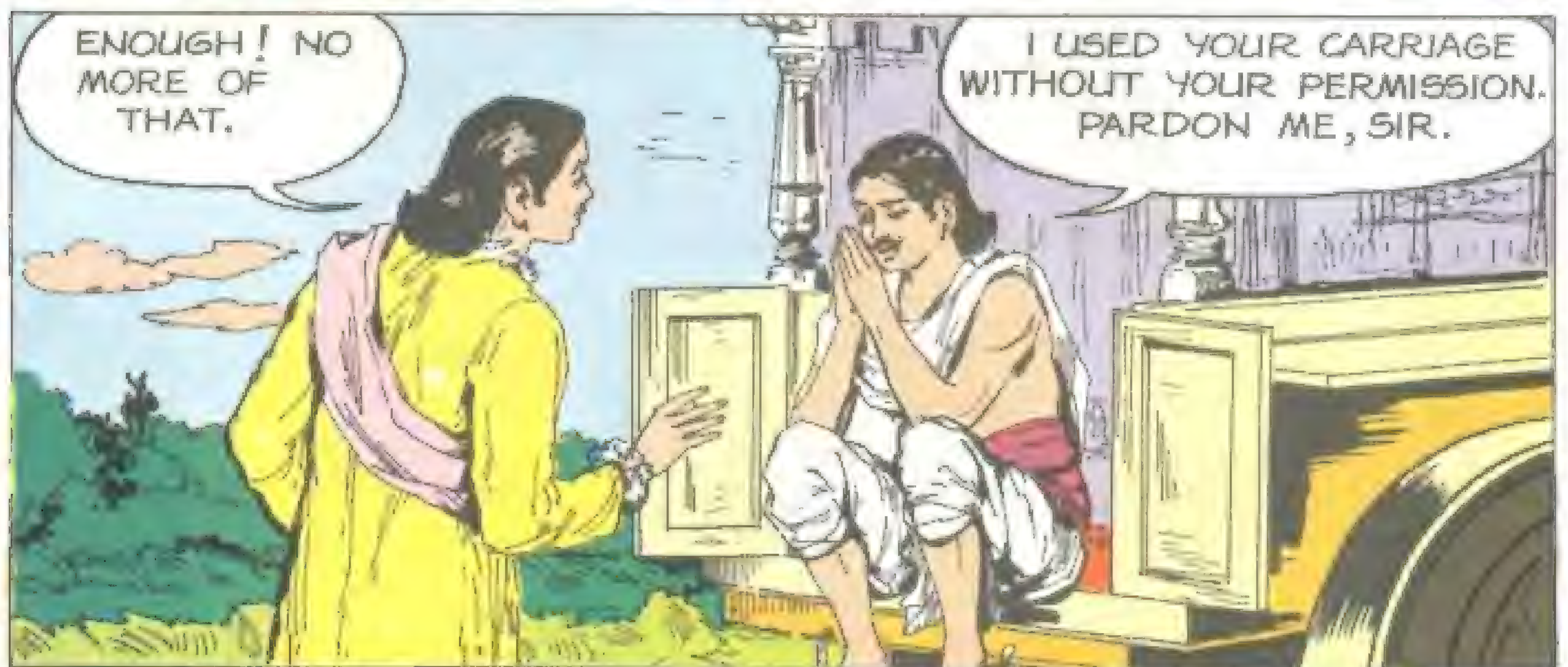

HER ANKLETS ARE QUIET. THE LADY MUST HAVE SETTLED DOWN. I SHALL DRIVE ON.

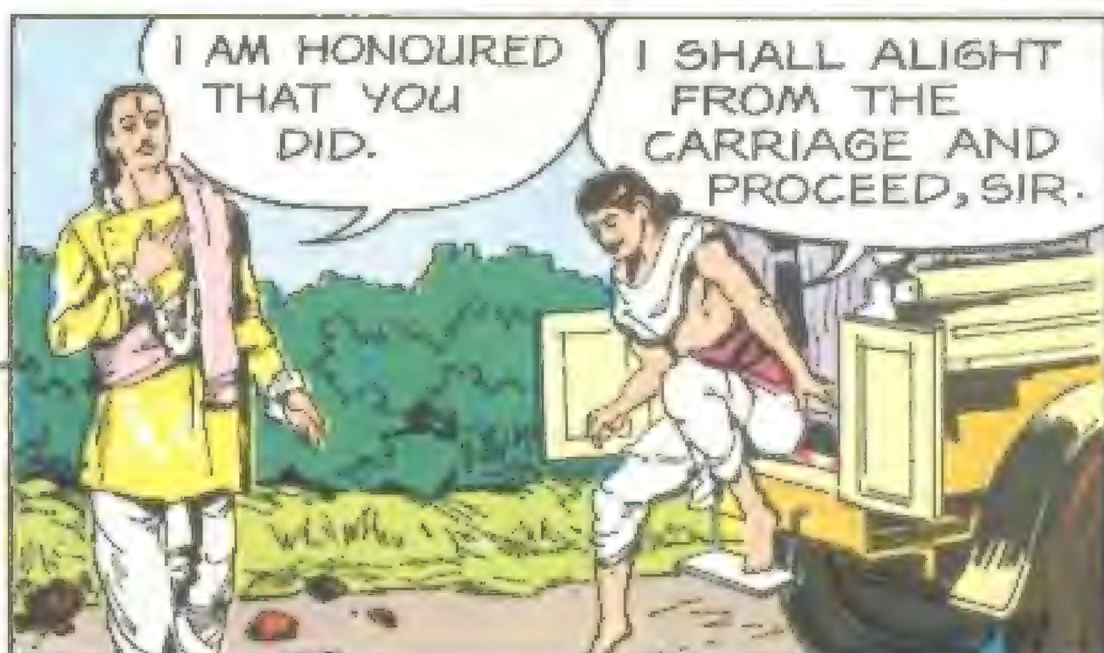

WHEN THE CARRIAGE ARRIVED AT THE PARK, THE EAGER CHARUDATTA STEPPED FORWARD TO HELP HIS LADY-LOVE OUT.
OH! OH! WHO ARE YOU, SIR?
I AM ARYAKA, THE SON OF GOPALA. I AM AT YOUR MERCY.


YOU ARE THE ONE WHOM KING PALAKA UNJUSTLY IMPRISONED!
I AM HE, SIR.

THERE! YOUR CHAINS HAVE BEEN REMOVED.

BUT STRONGER CHAINS BIND ME TO YOU...



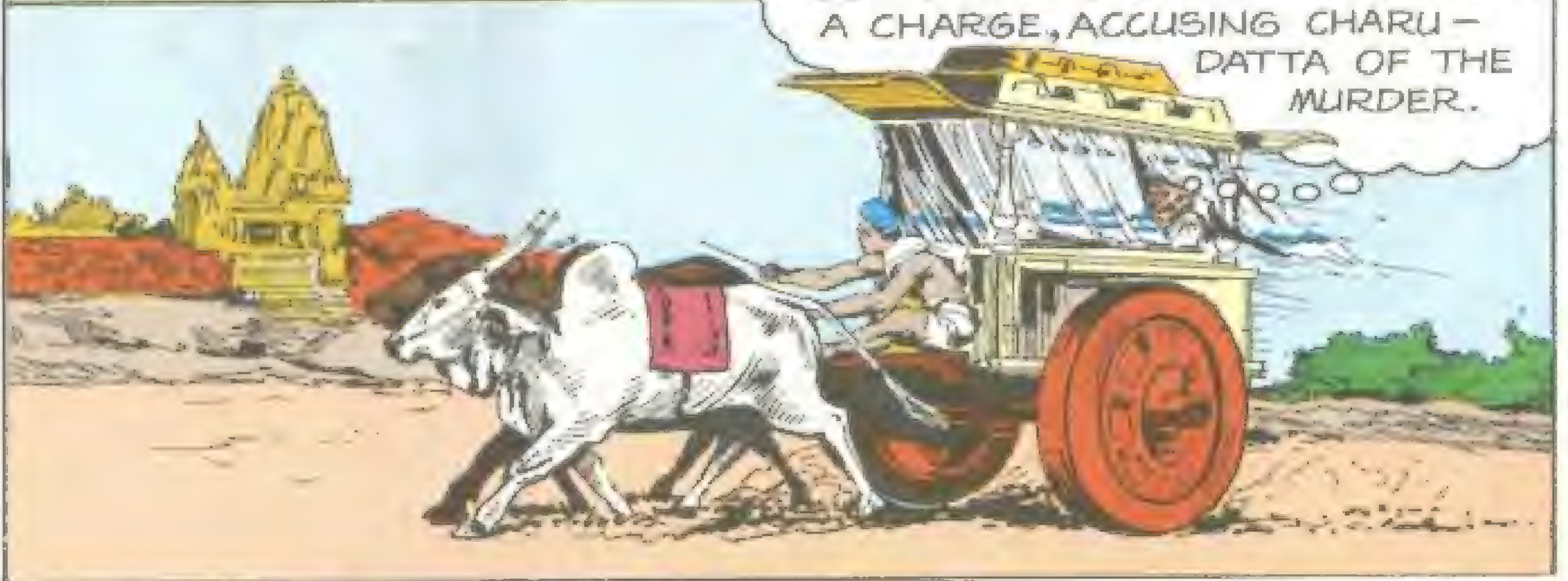





AFTER ARYAKA HAD LEFT—
WHY HAS VASANTA-SENA NOT COME? I AM ANXIOUS. I'D BETTER RETURN HOME AND SEE.

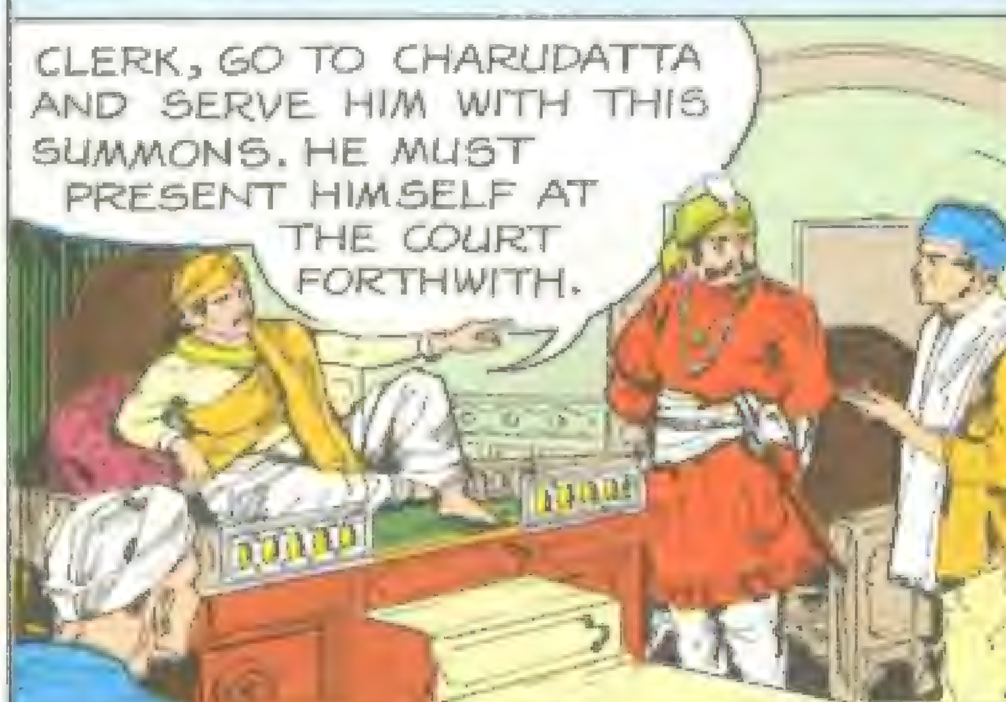

HOURS AFTER SAMSTHANAKA HAD ASSAULTED VASANTASENA, A MONK PASSING THAT WAY SAW HER.
WHAT'S THIS? A MURDER! NO. THANK GOD. SHE IS STILL ALIVE.


WHY, IT IS VASANTASENA. I SHALL TAKE HER HOME.


SAMSTHANAKA MEANWHILE WAS WORRIED ABOUT HIS DEED.
I HAVE MURDERED VASANTASENA. TO SAVE MY SKIN, I'D BETTER GO TO THE COURT AND PRESENT A CHARGE, ACCUSING CHARU-DATTA OF THE MURDER.


YES! THAT'S WHAT I SHALL SAY. CHARUDATTA, DISTRESSED BY HIS POVERTY, MURDERED THE WEALTHY DANCING GIRL, FOR HER JEWELS.


MEANWHILE CHARUDATTA HAD JUST RETURNED HOME.
SHE IS NOT HERE EITHER, THESE ARE HER JEWELS. WHAT ARE THEY DOING IN MY SON'S TOY CLAY-CART?


AT THE COURT AFTER SAMSTHANAKA HAD LODGED HIS CHARGE —
CLERK, GO TO CHARUDATTA AND SERVE HIM WITH THIS SUMMONS. HE MUST PRESENT HIMSELF AT THE COURT FORTHWITH.

HE SENT FOR MAITREYA.

TAKE THESE JEWELS BACK TO VASANTASENA. SHE MUST HAVE GIVEN THEM TO THE CHILD TO PLAY WITH AND FORGOTTEN ABOUT THEM.

I WILL GO RIGHT AWAY, SIR.

WHEN MAITREYA HAD LEFT –

I HOPE MAITREYA FINDS HER AT HOME.

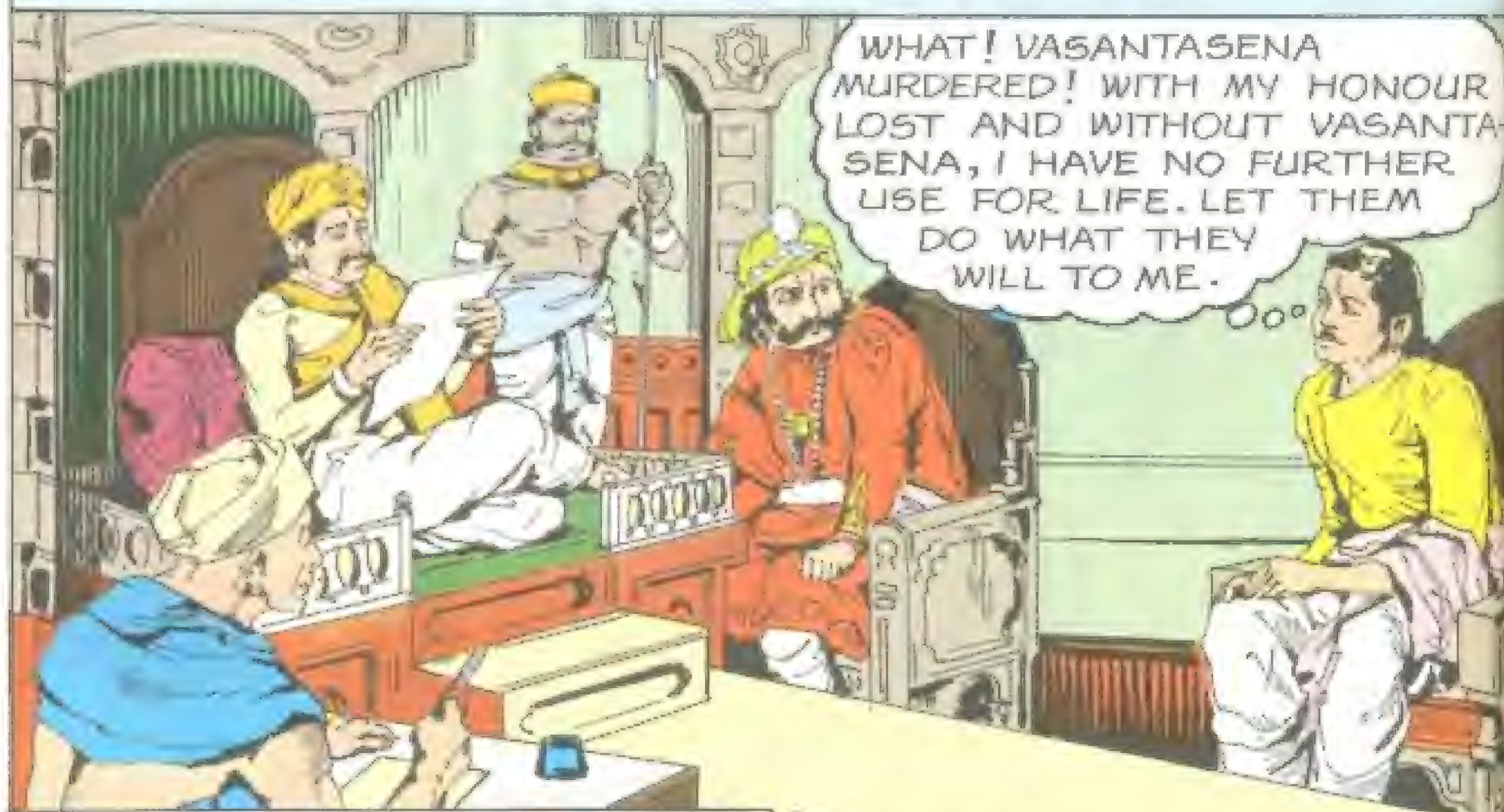
JUST THEN THE CLERK ENTERED AND SERVED HIS SUMMONS.

I AM BEWILDERED. WHAT DOES THE COURT SUSPECT? IS IT BECAUSE ARYAKA ESCAPED IN MY CARRIAGE?

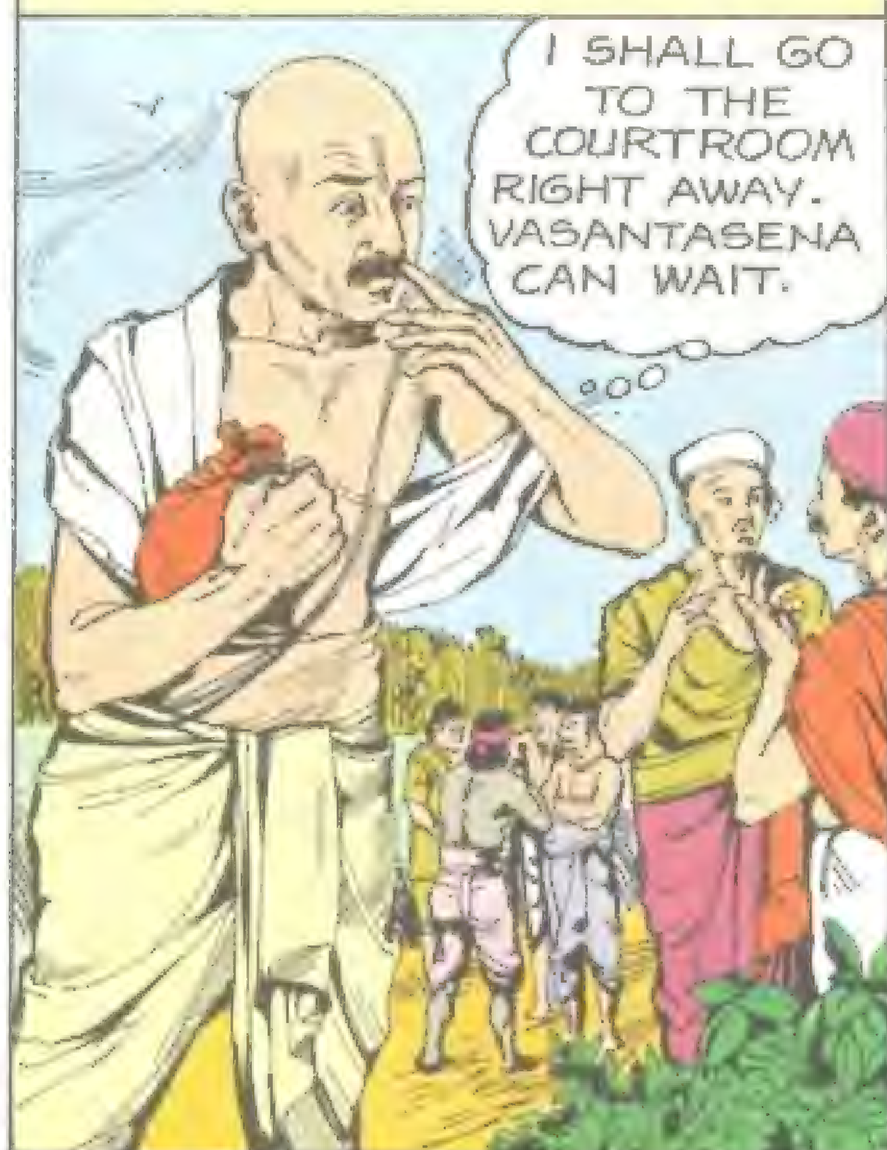
WELL, I SHALL SOON KNOW.

COME, LEAD ME TO THE COURTROOM.

AT THE COURT THE MOMENT CHARUDATTA HEARD THE CHARGES READ OUT, HE LOST ALL INTEREST IN THE CASE.

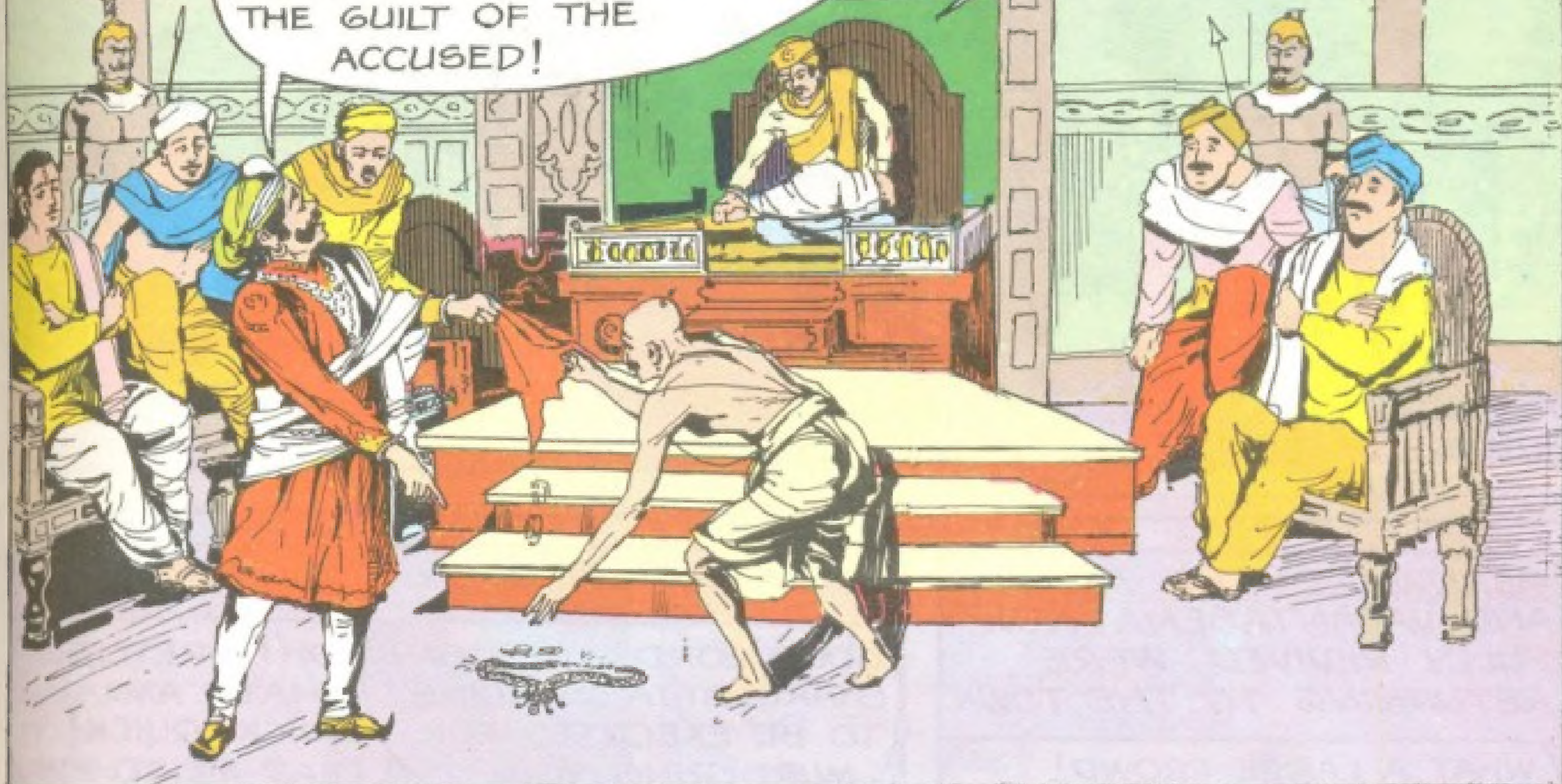


MAITREYA, ON HIS WAY TO VASANTASENA'S HOUSE, HEARD THE NEWS ABOUT CHARUDATTA FACING A TRIAL FOR MURDER.



AS THE CASE PROCEEDED, MAITREYA BURST INTO THE COURTROOM.

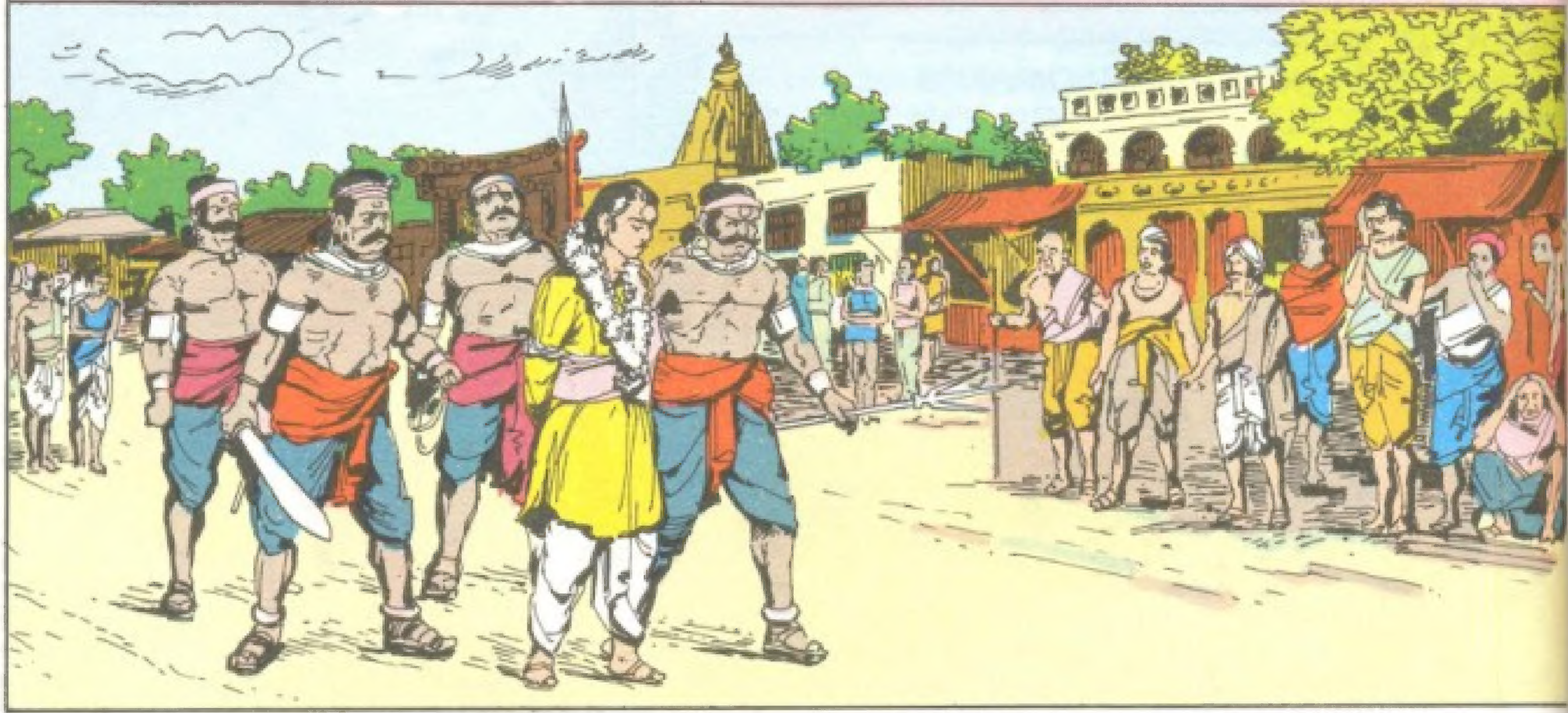




THE MESSENGER WHO WAS SENT TO THE KING SOON RETURNED. THE JUDGE READ OUT THE SENTENCE.

THE KING HAS DECIDED THAT YOU SHOULD BE EXECUTED WITH THE STOLEN JEWELS AROUND YOUR NECK.

AND SO CHARUDATTA WAS LED THROUGH THE STREETS, TILL THEY NEARED THE EXECUTION GROUNDS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE TOWN



MEANWHILE THE MONK AND VASANTASENA, NOW FULLY REVIVED, WERE RETURNING TO THE TOWN.



THE MONK SUDDENLY STOOD STILL.



AS THE EXECUTIONERS WERE GETTING READY-



AS IF IN REPLY TO HIS APPEAL–

STOP! STOP! I AM ALIVE. CHARUDATTA MUST NOT BE EXECUTED! HE IS INNOCENT.

AMAZING!

VASANTASENA ALIVE!

STRANGE

CHARUDATTA COULD NOT BELIEVE HIS EYES.

YES, CHARUDATTA! IT IS I, VASANTASENA, VERY MUCH ALIVE!

THEN VASANTASENA TURNED TO THE CROWD.

HEAR, ALL OF YOU. IT WAS THE EVIL SAMSTHANAKA WHO TRIED TO MURDER ME!

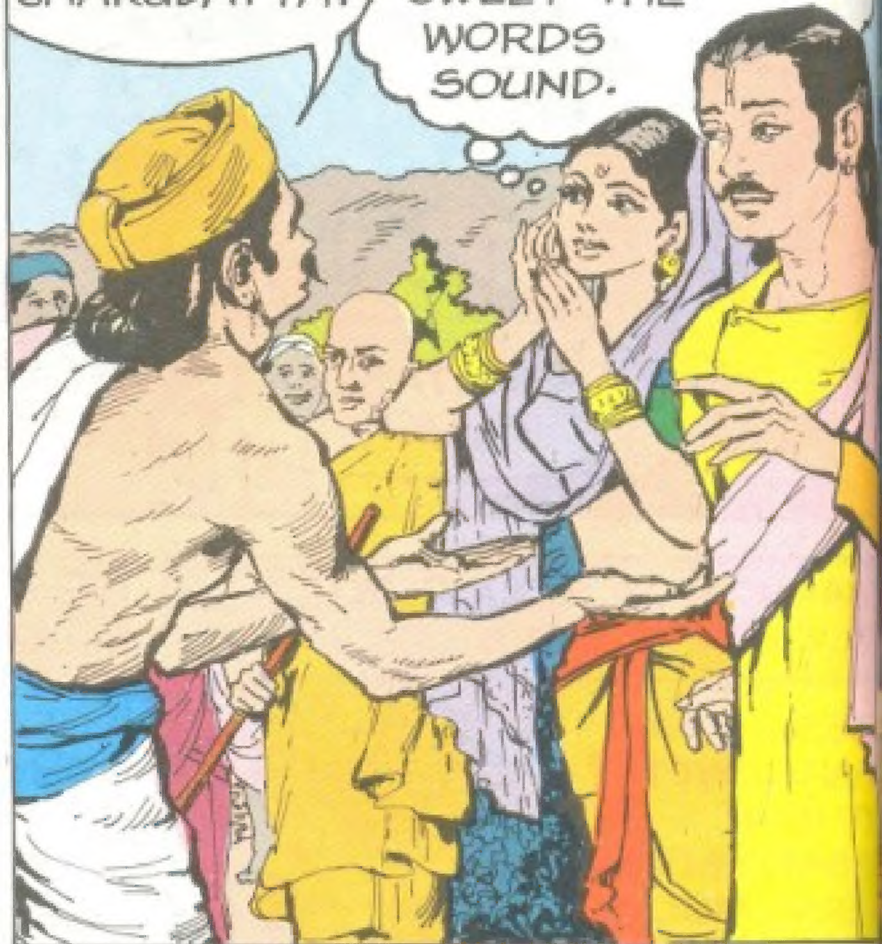
AT THAT MOMENT–

THERE COMES THE SCOUNDREL TO SEE IF HIS EVIL PLANS HAVE SUCCEEDED! KILL HIM!

NO, I BEG YOU, PLEASE SPARE HIS LIFE. THE PUNISHMENT HE NEEDS IS KINDNESS.

A MAN PUSHED HIS WAY THROUGH THE CROWD. IT WAS SHARVILAKA.





CHARUDATTA LED VASANTASENA TO HIS WIFE WHO WELCOMED THE TALENTED YOUNG DANCER.

MAITREYA HAS GIVEN US THE GOOD NEWS. WELCOME, LITTLE SISTER. YOU HAVE BROUGHT GOOD FORTUNE TO OUR HUSBAND AND HIS HOUSEHOLD.

I MUST HASTEN TO MADANIKA, WHO MUST BE ANXIOUSLY WAITING FOR ME.